

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T KUWAIT 3364

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY, KU, PLM

SUBJ: KUWAITI UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIAN POLICPUTOWARD PLO

1. SUMMARY: IN MY JULY 12 COURTESY CALL WHICH BECAME EXTENDED DISCUSSION, KUWAIT DEPPRIMIN/MININFO DESCRIBED INMERY CONFIDENTIAL TERMS HIS UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIAN POLICY TOWARD PLO WHICH EMERGED FROM HIS DISCUSSION JULY 11 WITH SYRIAN MININFO AHMAD ISKANDAR. ACCORDING TO DEPPRIMIN, REAL SYRIAN AIM IS TO CURB COMPLETELY ROLE OF ARAFAT AND PLO BY ALLOWING PALESTINIAN POWER AND INFLUENCE TO BE CRUSHED IN COURSE OF LEBANESE CONFLICT. SYRIANS FAVOR TRANSFER OF PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP TO WEST BANK. END TO LEBANESE CONFLICT WOULD COME WITH DE FACTO PARTITION OF LEBANON IN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM AREAS WITH ARAB PEACE FORCE INTERPOSING ITSELF ALONG PARTITION LINE. MODALITIES OF FUTURE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR UNIFIED LEBANON WOULD BE WORKED OUT BY LEBANESE UNDER SYRIAN GUIDANCE. END SUMMARY.

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2. DURING MY COURTESY CALL JULY 12 ON KUWAIT'S DEPPRIMIN/MININFO

SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI AL-SABAH WHICH EXTENDED INTO OVER AN HOUR OF DISCUSSION, DEPPRIMIN COMMENTED ON HIS JULY 11 MEETING WITH SYRIAN MININFO AHMAD ISKANDAR. HE SAID THAT AHMAD ISKANDAR HAD MADE STOP IN KUWAIT ON WAY BACK FROM NON-ALIGNED PRESS MEETING IN INDIA TO APPRISE GOK OF LATEST SYRIAN VIEWS ON LEBANESE SITUATION.

3. JABAR AL-ALI NOTED THAT IN MEETING WITH PRESS, AHMAD ISKANDAR HAD DENIED THAT SYRIA HAD BOMBARDED ANY PALESTINIAN CAMP OR LEBANESE VILLAGE, HE ALSO DECLARED SYRIAN OPPOSITION TO PARTITION IN LEBANON. SYRIAN MININFO CRITISIZED JUMBLATT WHO HE SAID WAS SYMBOL OF CONSPIRACY TO PIT PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AGAINST ARAB REGIMES FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS.

4. DEPPRIMIN THEN PROV DED ME WITH CONFIDENTIAL ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE SAID WAS REAL SYRIAN POSITION AS DESCRIBED BY AHMAD ISKANDAR. SYRIANS WERE DETERMINED TO BRING PLO TO ITS KNEES IN LEBANON AND THUS EFFECTIVELY REMOVE IT AS SPOKEMAN FOR PALESTINIANS IN ARAB WORLD. SYRIA APPARENTLY WOULD BE CONTENT WITH DE FACTO PARTITION OF LEBANON BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS UNTIL MODALITIES OF FUTURE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR UNIFIED LEBANON COULD BE 14(3\$ 975. SYRIA SAW CONFLICT IN LEBANON COMING TO AN END WITH ARAB PEACE FORCE INTERPOSED ALONG LINE DIVIDING CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIM AREAS. FOLLOWING THIS, LEBANON COULD FORMULATE NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRES SARKIS WITH, OF COURSE, SYRIAN GUIDANCE.

5. IN REPLY TO MY QUERY AS TO WHERE LEADERSHIP OF PALESTINIANS WOULD RESIDE AFTER ALL THIS, SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI SAID SYRIAN VIEW WAS THIS SHOULD COME FROM WEST BANK. ACCORDING TO AHMAD ISKANDAR, SYRIANS WERE NOT GOING TO TRY TO PROMOTE SAIQA IN PLACE OF PLO, NOTING FORMER ALREADY HAD CAUSED SYRIA ENOUGH PROBLEMS. WHAT WOULD BE SATISFACTORY TO PALESTINIANS REMAINING IN LEBANON WAS NOT CLEAR FROM JABAR AL-ALI'S ACCOUNT, PRESUMABLY HE WOULD REMAIN IN LEBANON, BUT UNDER FIRM POLITICAL RESTRICTIONS. DEPPRIMIN DID NOT FORSEE SHIFT OF LOCUS OF PALESTINIAN DECISION-MAKING APARATUS TO KUWAIT, SINCE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY HERE WAS NOT A MILITANT SORT, AND ITS MEMBERS WOULD NOT WANT TO JEOPARDIZE CONSERABLE PERSONAL STAKE THEY HAD BUILT UP IN KUWAIT.

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6. JABER AL-ALI CONCLUDED BY OBSERVING THAT ALL MODERATE ARAB REGIMES SUPPORTED SYRIA'S ACTIONS IN LEBANON AND WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE ARAFAT AND PLO WINGS SEVERELY CLIPPED.

7. COMMENT: EVENTS IN LEBANON AND SYRIAN ROLE THEREIN WOULD TEND TO LEND CREDENCE TO THIS ANALYSIS OF SYRIAN POLITICAL OBJECTIVES VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS. CERTAINLY GOK LEADERSHIP

IS NOT UNSYMPATHETIC TO CURBING OF PALESTINIANS INFLUENCE IN ARAB AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY AS REFLECTED IN ITS OWN POSITION IN KUWAIT. HOWEVER, THIS KUWAITI VIEW WAS HARDLY LIKELY TO BE EXPRESSED EXCEPT IN MOST COMCIDENTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. FOR EXAMPLE, ANTI-SYRIAN JOURNAL, "AL WATAN", REPORTED THAT DEPPRIMIN, IN HIS MEETING WITH AHMAD ISKANDAR, EXPRESSED ANXIETY OVER DETERIORATION OF LEBANESE SITUATION AND STATUS OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE WHICH IS CONSIDERED A "TRUST" BY ALL ARABS. "AL WATAN" SAID IT LEARNED THAT EXPLANATIONS OF SYRIAN MININFO WERE NOT CONSIDERED CONVINCING ENOUGH. AS I UNDERSTAND IT, SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI TENDS TO BE MOST OUTSPOKEN MEMBER OF THE RULING SABAH FAMILY LEADERSHIP AND, AT LEAST, ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PROFESSION TO ME, IS VERY PRO-US AND PRO-UK, WHICH IS WHY HE MAY HAVE CHOSEN TO EXPRESS THESE VIEWS TO ME.

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